

Sweet Love 3121

Chapter 3121: Innocence 42

The students participating in the talent show all needed to go to the auditorium in advance to be orientated. The teachers briefed us on how we should go on stage, how to introduce ourselves, and even how to smile when facing the camera.

It was only then that I realized that there would be a video recording made of the entire event. This made me even more nervous.

4 pm.

I stood in the magnificent auditorium and saw that the students had slowly entered the venue. The art teacher had put on light makeup for me. I wore the best dress I owned to go on stage.

As the opening theme song, I was in charge of taking the lead. Just as the recital was about to begin, I heard someone calling my name. I turned around, only to find Su Qi waving at me from the first row. I immediately noticed the person standing next to him, looking at me silently.

When Dongyu saw me, he straightened up and looked at me nervously. His eyes were filled with anticipation.

Our eyes met briefly. Before I could say anything, the arts teacher pulled me over and said, "Xiachun, it's your turn!"

I nodded and hurried to the back of the stage. It wasn't until the host announced my name that I realized what was going on. The teacher urged me on, and grabbed the last few seconds to instruct me. I knew he did it to help me relax and not be too nervous.

When I stepped onto the stage, the rest of the hall was pitch black.

Smack!

The stage lights fell on me. In that instant, I was bathed in the blazing white glow. The entire world was barren.

I became nervous and held the microphone in my hands, not knowing what to do. I looked around but couldn't see anything.

Finally, at the front of the stage, I saw him. He was silhouetted against the light. I couldn't make out his face, but I knew it had to be him.

"Greetings, everyone! I'm... I'm Yin Xiachun from Year 2 Class 1! I... I'm very honored to be on this stage... Next, I..."

I guessed that the arts teacher who was watching from backstage must have been so angry that he beat his chest and stamped his feet. Then, he desperately lowered his voice and said, "Don't be nervous! Don't be nervous!"

But I couldn't hear or see anything.

My heart was pounding so much that it was about to jump out of my throat!

I pressed my hand against my chest. Finally, after calming down a little, I slowly said, "Hello, everyone. I'm Yin Xiachun from Year 2 Class 1. I'm very honored to be on this beautiful stage. Next, I'd like to present a piano piece 'Autumn Whisper'."

Applause sounded out from below the stage.

I turned around and gently held my chest where my heart was racing. I slowly walked to the grand piano. When I sat down, my fingers accidentally touched the piano keys. This was picked up by the microphone. The wrong notes presented a discordant sound.

I frowned and suddenly took a deep breath. I gently stroked the piano keys again. I imagined Dongyu sitting beside me. And just like this, my nervous soul seemed to have found an out!

My ten fingers moved and then the notes flowed smoothly from my fingertips.

Unobstructed, soothing, harmonious.

The playing technique for this piece was much more difficult than "Jiangnan", but the advantage was that I had practiced this song for an entire year. With just a bit of polishing up, I was able to become proficient as if I was one with the instrument.

At the end of the piece, I sat there in a daze for a long time. It wasn't until the audience erupted into thunderous applause that I finally reacted. Behind me, the teacher excitedly urged, "Take a bow! Take a bow!"

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I immediately stood up, only to see Dongyu suddenly walk onto the stage. He hugged me tightly amidst the applause and cheers.

At the time, I felt that even with so many people in the auditorium, the applause was not as warm as his hug.

After the recital, I was just about to pack up and go home with Dongyu, who was waiting for me at the school gate with Su Qi, when I thought that maybe this occasion would be the best time for me to reconcile with him.

Just as I reached the gate, I saw Su Qi waving at me. I smiled as I walked over, only to be greeted by a couple of my fellow students. They stopped me excitedly when they saw me.

"Xiachun! Was that your boyfriend who hugged you on stage just now?"

I was startled and followed their gaze to Dongyu. I heard them whispering excitedly, "He's so dashing! Xiachun, what's your boyfriend's name?"

"He..."

Hearing their discussion, Su Qi immediately walked over and said unhappily, “Have you guys misunderstood? His name is Yin Dongyu, he’s not Yin Xiachun’s boyfriend. They are siblings, can’t you see that?”

“Ah...”

“Sheesh! I thought he was Yin Xiachun’s boyfriend, but it turns out they’re siblings!”

“Hahaha! Xiachun, don’t mind us!”

Hearing this, Dong Yu turned his face away expressionlessly.

I didn’t feel good hearing that either. I had no idea what Dongyu thought, but on the way home, Su Qi was talking and laughing, while he only walked along by the side in silence.

Until we got home, he had not said much to me. Instead, he went back to his room and locked the door.

I stood in a daze outside his room for a long time before returning to my room in a state of distraction.

Initially, I had been expecting the tension between us to ease over time.

However, time did not bring much changes to our tensed relationship. Instead, it brought a strange girl.

The first time I saw that girl was during Dongyu’s 16th birthday.

During that winter vacation, the weather was especially cold. It was so cold that it could freeze a person’s heartbeat.

In those days, birthdays would usually involve booking a table and inviting a few good friends and classmates for a meal. After dinner, we would go to the karaoke. Most of the time, parents would be more indulgent on that special occasion, so we would get home late.

Dongyu’s birthdays had always been celebrated at home because he didn’t like too many people and crowded environments.

He said that he wanted to have hotpot at home for his birthday.

Early in the morning, I excitedly climbed out of bed and reached for the piggy bank on my desk. I smashed it and picked up the change inside. Among the notes and coins were two ten-dollar bills.

I thought to myself, having saved my pocket money for a year, I finally had a use for it!

When Dongyu celebrated his birthday as a child, I never remembered to give him presents. In my opinion, birthdays were meaningful as long as the family celebrated it together.

However, in junior high school, the concept of birthday presents was gradually impressed upon me.

After lunch, I took my bag of money and went to the cake shop. I ordered a 10-inch birthday cake and repeatedly reminded the shop to have “Happy Birthday to Dongyu!” written on it!

I wasn’t in a hurry to leave the store. I waited all afternoon for the cake to be ready. After counting the candles, I carried the cake home.

At the door, I saw Dongyu—and an unfamiliar girl.

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I'd never seen this girl before. She was thin, tall, with a pretty face and a sweet smile. She wore a crisp white dress.

"Dongyu!"

I ran over, hiding the cake behind me. When I came up to him, I asked him curiously, "Who is she?"

Dongyu glanced at me, his face inexplicably tense. The girl glanced at me and introduced herself naturally, "You're Dongyu's sister, right?"

"Yes, I am!"

"How do you do!"

She smiled and extended her hand to express her goodwill. "I'm Dongyu's girlfriend. I'm in the same grade as him!"

Girlfriend?

I sized her up with some surprise, obviously not believing her one-sided story, so that I didn't immediately respond to her outstretched hand. Instead, I stared at her blankly, at a loss.

"Lin Li, this is my sister, Xiachun."

Dongyu introduced her to me and said, "Xiachun, this is my girlfriend, Lin Li."

"Your... girlfriend?"

I couldn't believe it, so much so that my expression looked pathetic.

Dongyu saw my sorry state and his expression started to show discomfort.

Lin Li did not feel awkward at all. Instead, she smiled and said, "Am I... not liked by her?"

Dongyu smiled and replied, "Of course not. She's just a little shy."

Shy...

Yes, I was afraid of strangers.

Especially of this girlfriend who appeared out of the blue and caught me off-guard.

Perhaps sensing that the atmosphere was getting too tense, Dongyu hurriedly said to her, "Let's go upstairs first!"

Then, he turned to me and said, "You should hurry upstairs and prepare the hotpot! Mom and Dad aren't home tonight. You must keep this a secret!"

He raised a finger to his lips and winked at me. I just stood there, stunned, as he went upstairs.

I don't know why I was so stubborn back then, standing there stupidly downstairs for so long.

Perhaps I was wondering if Dongyu would come back down to look for me, if he realized after some time that I had not gone upstairs?

He was such a meticulous person, could he tell that I was unhappy?

He would coax me gently, as he had in the past, and then tell me — this was only a lie?

I kept standing there like a fool and didn't go upstairs until Su Qi arrived. He parked his bicycle and found me standing downstairs, motionless. He came over and patted me on the shoulder.

“Why aren't you going upstairs?”

At his reminder, I snapped out of my daze and looked up at the sky. I didn't realize, it was already dusk.

I had actually stood there stupidly for two hours.

He was half-amused, seeing that I was in such a daze with the cake in my hand. He took it from me. It was only then that I realized that my fingers were bleeding from the ribbon of the cake cutting into my flesh.

“Let's go upstairs, little fool.”

Su Qi said, reaching out to take my hand.

I immediately asked him, “Su Qi, does Dongyu have a girlfriend?”

Su Qi didn't look surprised. Instead, he asked matter-of-factly, “Don't you already know? You even said Dongyu never hid anything from you. Didn't he tell you about his girlfriend?”

I shook my head and asked him, “How long have they been dating?”

“About a month! Every night, they go home from school together.”

“Oh,” I said, then realized why he'd been coming home so late after school recently.

He had a girlfriend...

I couldn't quite accept this.

Su Qi led me upstairs by the hand. When we entered the house, Dongyu was in the kitchen, preparing ingredients for the hot pot.

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Su Qi led me upstairs by the hand. When we entered the house, Dongyu was in the kitchen, preparing ingredients for the hot pot.

Today should have been a very happy occasion for me. Everyone knew about my love for hotpot, especially the chicken soup base that Dongyu made. It was always delicious and fresh.

But standing there, I saw that besides Dongyu in the kitchen, there was the girl.

She stood beside him and helped him out. He was mixing the soup while she was preparing the ingredients for the hotpot. The two of them chatted happily and harmoniously.

The kitchen was too small for a third person.

However, the place next to Dongyu, which had always belonged to me, was now occupied by another girl.

I felt a little suffocated as I placed the cake on the table with a numb expression. I had just opened the box when Lin Li walked out of the kitchen. When she saw me at the table, she quickly walked over and removed the cake to the side table.

“It’s not the time for the cake yet! The hotpot is almost ready!”

As she spoke, she busied herself.

I looked at her, not sure what I was thinking. My mind was empty, and for a moment, many images flashed through it.

Dongyu said that sooner or later, he would fall in love with a girl and be with her for the rest of his life.

That person would not be me.

Then... could she be that girl?

So, what was this...

Our relationship had suddenly become a little strained after our last argument in the music room.

He seemed to be avoiding me. No matter what I said to him, his attitude became much more indifferent than before. It was neither cold nor warm.

He must be angry!

I wanted to cheer him up and try to break this awkwardness. I’d thought this birthday would be the occasion to somehow ease the icy relationship between us.

Unexpectedly, such a thing had happened.

Dongyu brought out the hotpot. After the four of us sat down, Su Qi looked at it and asked curiously, “Just the four of us?”

“Yes.” Dongyu nodded. “I don’t like having too many people around.”

“I know you. You don’t like noisy environments! It’s good to have four people. It’s also good to have a quiet birthday!”

Su Qi said and clapped his hands. “Let’s start then!”

Lin Li stood up too, and poured drinks out for us.

I sat in my seat with a numb expression on my face. I didn’t know what I was thinking, I could only watch as Lin Li continuously slipped the ingredients into the pot and fished them out.

She was a girl who knew how to take care of people. She took the initiative to pick up the ingredients for Dongyu. Seeing that I hadn't touched my chopsticks, she picked up another piece of beef for me and asked with a smile, "Why aren't you eating?"

"Oh..."

I quickly picked up my chopsticks and looked at the hotpot. The steam that rushed towards my face entered my eyes, making it difficult for me to see clearly.

"It's so hot."

I rubbed my eyes and blinked, forcing a smile.

Dongyu suddenly raised his head and looked at me. However, he quickly turned his head and smiled at Lin Li. I had no idea what he was saying to her.

I suddenly realized that I couldn't hear anything, I could not make out what he was saying.

The hotpot was quickly scooped clean. Su Qi held her stomach and slumped on the chair, calling out, "I'm so stuffed!"

I said immediately, "We haven't eaten the cake yet!"

Lin Li replied, "I'm full too! What should I do? I don't have space for the cake anymore!"

Su Qi said, "At least blow out the candles and make a wish!"

Dongyu furrowed his brows and said, "There's no need to blow out the candles. I'm sure my wish won't come true."

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"There's no need to blow out the candles. Anyway, I'm sure my wish won't come true."

Lin Li's expression froze as well. "But, people always ask for candles so that they can make wishes on their birthdays!"

Dongyu replied, "My family's tradition is to eat longevity noodles."

"I see..."

I suddenly stood up and placed the cake on the table. Then, I arranged the sixteen candles one by one. I didn't know what I was obsessing over. I lit the candles one by one with the lighter and said to Dongyu, "Dongyu, make a wish!? Although the wish might not necessarily come true, it might come true one day."

Dongyu raised his head and finally looked me in the eye. After a moment of silence, his lips turned upwards in a smile that wasn't really a smile. "My wish will never come true."

My smile faltered.

Su Qi could not help being curious. "What kind of wish is it that even you believe it will never be fulfilled?"

"Let me guess!" Lin Li thought for a moment. "Getting into a good university?"

Su Qi said, "Given Dongyu's results, it's definitely not difficult for him to get into a top university. Is there even a need to make a wish?"

Lin Li guessed again, "Find a decent job in the future."

Su Qi retorted again, "Do you need to worry about your job after attending a good university? Lin Li, don't make wild guesses. Dongyu is always unfathomable. Who knows what he's thinking all day?"

Suddenly I walked over to the switch and turned off the lights.

At once, all that could be seen in the dining room was the flickering glow of the candles, and Dongyu's face lit by the glow. His deep set facial features looked inexplicably downcast.

Su Qi also called out, "Quickly make a wish! Whether it will come true or not, there must be a wish! Close your eyes, show some sincerity!"

Only then did Dongyu close his eyes. Five seconds later, he blew out the candle with a puff.

Su Qi came over and turned on the lights, but when he glanced at me and saw me standing there in a daze, he looked startled.

"What's the matter?!"

"Nothing!"

I regained my composure and said, "Let's cut the cake!"

Dongyu suddenly stood up and said, "I'm not eating anymore. Lin Li and I have made plans to go to the park to observe the Lantern Festival. Do you guys want to come along?"

I realized, the Lantern Festival was just around the corner. There would be a light show in the park and it would be beautiful. I had always wanted to go with Dongyu.

The night view would be amazing for sure.

But...

I looked at Lin Li with a complicated expression.

Su Qi was indifferent. "Lantern Festival? What's there to see? It's your birthday today, let's go sing!"

I added, "Yes, I want to sing!"

Lin Li, on the contrary, said, "I want to go to the Lantern Festival! It's a rare opportunity that happens only once a year! Su Qi, Xia Chun, let's go together!"

"I don't wish to look at lanterns," I said.

I didn't want to see them walking hand in hand through the lantern displays.

Normally, when I was being obstinate, Dongyu would give in immediately, being sensitive to my emotions.

However, that night, he did not do so. Instead, he said, "Su Qi, accompany her to the karaoke. Lin Li and I will go to the Lantern Festival as we've already made plans."

Then, he said to Lin Li, "Let's wash the dishes before going!"

Lin Li nodded. The two of them carried the bowls and chopsticks into the kitchen and started washing the dishes while laughing and chatting.

Suddenly, I realized that Dongyu's rare smile was no longer exclusive to me.

When he looked at me, that doting smile I used to know was no longer there.

Lin Li had stolen his precious smile from me.

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I just sat there in the dining room, silently watching their back view as they washed the dishes in the kitchen. I suddenly thought back to the times when I was a child, when I had been punished by my mother to do housework. I'd stand on a bench to wash the dishes in the kitchen, and Dongyu would come over and join me.

Initially, I hated washing dishes to the core. It was dull and boring, but because of him, I came to enjoy it.

Once, when we were fooling around, he accidentally splashed foam all over my face, and I accidentally ate most of it.

The foam that the detergent had made in the water was bitter and astringent. I wrinkled my face at the taste of it.

Dong Yu went downstairs and bought a bottle of Coke with his remaining allowance, urging me to drink it.

Forced by him, I downed a whole can of Coke as he looked on and asked anxiously. "How is it?" he asked, looking nervous. "Still tasting the bitterness?"

I stared at him for a long time before suddenly opening my mouth and letting out a loud burp.

He was scared out of his wits, but when he saw me giggling like an idiot, he came up to me and took a sniff.

"Yes! It smells like detergent!"

I was so angry I chased him around the house and hit him.

"It's all your fault! If it weren't for you, would I have eaten the foam?"

As he dodged me, he teased, "That's because you're so stupid! Little fool! Little fool!"

“I’ll teach you to call me stupid!”

“Little fool!”

As these scenes overlapped, I snapped out of my thoughts and saw that Dong Yu and Lin Li had already done the dishes. They walked out of the kitchen, picked up their coats, and got ready to leave.

I stood behind him and asked cautiously, “Are you really not eating the cake?”

Dongyu did not turn around. Instead, he said calmly, “I told you, I don’t like eating cakes.”

With that, he held Lin Li’s hand and left.

The door slammed shut, leaving Su Qi and me standing there.

I felt so aggrieved that my eyes turned red. I walked to the table and looked at the cake. The words “Happy Birthday to Dongyu” were written on it! Now, it seemed somewhat ironic!

“This cake is very expensive...”

I burst into tears. “I cost me a year’s savings to buy this cake. Why did he say he didn’t like eating cakes? Is it because it doesn’t taste good?”

Su Qi panicked when he saw me crying. He walked over and comforted me, “Why are you crying?... Ignore him! Even if he doesn’t like it, I do!”

As he spoke, he sat me down at the table and sliced the cake. Then, he picked up his fork and started eating.

“It’s yummy.”

As he spoke, he looked at me. My hands held the cake motionlessly and tears fell onto it.

He was suddenly at a loss. He came over and hugged my shoulders.

“Do you know that it scares me when you cry?! Whenever you cry, it causes me to lose my mind! Tell me, what should I do with you?”

He squatted down in front of me and coaxed me. “What can I do so that you’ll stop crying?”

“Su Qi...”

My mouth trembled and my voice was as light as a feather. “Take me to the karaoke!”

Su Qi was stunned, but he nodded without hesitation.

...

At that time, karaoke was a very trendy thing. To us students, karaoke rooms cost a bomb. Just a private room alone was more than 200 yuan. Some of the better ones cost more than 500 yuan.

Coupled with alcohol and beverages, this kind of expenses was not something ordinary students could afford.

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It was also because of Su Qi that I stepped into the karaoke room for the first time in my life. The night of Dongyu's birthday was the second time I had been to a karaoke.

Compared to the excitement of the first time, this time round, it felt rather old fashioned as Su Qi and I sat alone in the karaoke room.

We selected many songs, most of which were popular songs back then.

At that time, Jay Chou and Lin Junjie's songs were popular. I selected "I Still Miss Her", grabbed the microphone and sang.

"Tears are drowning me

Who should actually be sad?

Who actually gave up this relationship

I finally come to understand

Unachievable promises

Become shackles

In reality, happiness is forever in shortage

Please tell her

I don't love her

Sadly laughing

Self-punishing

I wish to end all struggles

Cross my heart

To tell a truthful lie

Don't tell her

I still miss her

It's easier to leave behind hate than love

When tears are stuck in my throat

Just let the silence

Represent all answers..."

This song was saved in Dongyu's MP3 for the longest time.

At that time, I didn't understand why he liked this song. When I first heard it, the tune was nice, and the lyrics were sad and beautiful. I also became addicted to it. I collected many of Lin Junjie's songs and became his little fan.

However, after listening to so many songs, it was ultimately this one song that I never got tired of.

"I don't love, I don't feel pain, I don't understand

My heart has been emptied

And I don't mean what I say.

Please tell her

I don't love her

Sadly laughing

Self-punishing

I wish to end all struggles

Cross my heart

To tell a truthful lie

Don't tell her

I still miss her

It's easier to leave behind hate than love

When tears are stuck in my throat

Just let the silence

Represent all answers..."

After singing this song, I suddenly felt as if every word in the lyrics was stabbing at my heart, and somewhere in my chest, there was an unbearable pain. I grabbed a can of beer, pulled the tab, and took a big gulp.

Su Qi looked at me silently. Maybe he could tell that something was wrong with my mood today, but he couldn't read my sadness. For a moment, he just sat silently beside me and put his arm around my shoulders.

"Ignore them!" I said to him, "We'll have our karaoke session!"

Su Qi was concerned. "Xiachun, what's wrong? You've been drinking so much. Are you okay?"

"What's this bit of wine?"

As I spoke, I opened my mouth to take another swig. He finally couldn't take it anymore. He pressed his hand against mine, stopping me.

“Stop drinking! Are you here to sing or drink?”

“You ordered so much wine. Isn’t it a waste not to drink?”

“You don’t have to finish it all!”

I hugged his shoulders without saying anything. At that time, because of the alcohol, my head gradually started to feel dizzy. I leaned close to him and inched my face close to his. I smiled and under my alcohol laden breath said, “Sing with me, okay?”

“...Okay.”

“I heard that you sing very well. Sing a song for me!”

Su Qi smiled, then went to the jukebox and selected a song. Maybe he guessed I liked Lin Junjie’s song. He selected the song, “I Want to Love Her.”

“It started raining

He held the umbrella standing next to you

But I’m not happy

Because I saw the reluctant smile on his face

I really want to love her

But the eyes lie

It’s easier to hide

Lest feelings become complicated

I really want to love her

But reason disagreed

Is retreating a solution?

Who has an answer for me

If we can’t bear

We’d both be victims

I really want to love her

But the eyes lie

It’s easier to hide

Lest feelings become complicated

I really want to love her

But reason disagreed

Is retreating a solution?

Who has an answer for me

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When love is at risk

Will we be terribly scarred

Will we all suffer miserably

I really want to love her

But the eyes lie

It's easier to hide

Lest feelings become complicated

I really want to love her

But reason disagreed

Is retreating a solution?

Who has an answer for me

Oh

Love teaches us not to let go..."

Love teaches us not to let go.

I drank my beer in silence. However, the beer that went in my mouth seemed to run out of my eyes. My vision gradually became blurry and I couldn't see clearly anymore.

I quickly rubbed my eyes and downed one can after another.

Su Qi got a little upset. He snatched the beer from my hand and chided in an angry tone that I've not heard him use on me before, "You can't drink anymore!"

I insisted, "I want more!"

I was sad. It felt as though something was stuck fast in my chest. I couldn't swallow it, nor could I spit it out!

I wondered if getting drunk would make me feel better.

Even if it was for just one night, it was enough to save me one night of suffering.

I finally understood why some people liked to drink when they were sad. It wasn't because they were pretentious, but because it could cover up some of the pain and it enabled them to deal with it numbly.

Although the pain would probably return in its entirety again the next day, but at least for a short time, it would alleviate their suffering.

Perhaps it was because I had drunk too much, I felt my stomach churning. I rushed to the washroom and bent over the basin. I retched, but nothing came out.

Su Qi walked over with some green tea. He unscrewed the cap and handed the bottle to me, saying helplessly, "Stop drinking already. If you drink any more, you'll really get drunk! And that will feel horrid!"

I took the green tea and drank most of it. I was unsteady on my feet for a short time, but my mind slowly cleared.

I looked up at him. He might have been startled to see my bloodshot eyes and the swollen lids.

"Xiachun, something's wrong with you today..."

I suddenly hugged him tightly.

A crazy thought flashed across my mind!

Because I had taken the initiative to hug him, Su Qi's body instantly stiffened. He looked at me blankly, unable to tell if this was happening because of the alcohol or because I couldn't contain my feelings.

However, the next second, I did something even crazier.

I took his face in my hands and gently kissed his lips.

Then I drew myself back and looked at him earnestly. Noticing that he still looked startled, I smiled through my tears. "Don't you like me, Su Qi?" I asked dryly.

"Uh huh..."

Su Qi nodded. "I've liked you for a long time. Do you still doubt it?"

"Then let's date, shall we?"

After I said that, Su Qi was stunned for about five seconds before a smile appeared on his face. He looked most pleasantly surprised.

"You're finally agreeing to date me?!"

He looked at me seriously. "Xiachun, you're not joking, are you? Or are you just drunk and spouting nonsense? Will you regret it tomorrow?"

"No, I promise to date you!"

Su Qi smiled radiantly and took me into his embrace. Then, he whispered into my ear, "Little fool, do you like me too?"

I replied calmly, "No... I don't like you."

Su Qi was taken aback by my reply. He looked at me with a baffled expression.

“If you don’t like me, why do you agree to date me?”

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“I’ve always been slow to warm up to people, so it’s hard for me to like someone. But, since you’ve been wooing me for so long, I’ve decided to try dating you!”

Outwardly, I was smiling, but my heart was pleading, *“Su Qi, please let me fall in love with you, let me fall in love with you without hesitation, without any care...”*

Just like how I like Dongyu. Let me like you!

I want to... like you too.

Su Qi was silent for a few seconds.

I suspected that he was starting to feel troubled, so I said, “Is it too much? If it’s too much, let’s forget it!”

Then, I turned to leave.

Su Qi hugged me nervously from behind and quickly said, “No!”

“What?”

He turned me around and caressed my face, smiling brightly. “I won’t give up, as long as there’s a glimmer of hope! Xiachun, be my girlfriend!”

My tears fell again as I agreed with a smile.

I was serious too, really serious about trying to make things work with him.

He couldn’t feel my other emotions, and he seemed strangely excited and completely immersed in joy. He held my face and asked with a smile, “Then may I kiss my girlfriend now?”

Unlike the overbearing way he’d acted when we first met, he was now actually asking for my permission.

I looked into his eyes – they were exceptionally beautiful, like black jade agate. At this moment, they were so affectionate that they seemed to draw my soul away!

I was actually a little nervous to look directly into his eyes. Blushing, I lowered my head, pursed my lips, and nodded lightly with a faint smile. In the next second, he closed in on me and kissed my lips carefully, as if I was a precious treasure. Then, he lifted my chin, bent over, and kissed me again.

And I responded like a devout student, kissing him back the way he kissed me.

But as his kiss deepened, my heart became like a stagnant pool, unperturbed, without any ripples. It beat quietly with no echo.

His lips were soft and warm, different from Dongyu’s.

Dongyu's lips were thin and slightly cold.

One was passionate like fire; the other was as cold as ice.

And they felt different!

I didn't feel anything exceptional when Su Qi kissed me. My heart didn't seem to be beating too hard either.

I couldn't help but recall the times I kissed Dongyu. In the music room, in the grove at the bonfire party, we had a light taste of each other's lips. At those times, my heart was beating so loud it seemed to burst my eardrums.

At those times, my heart pounded like thunder.

It was different.

I was losing track of how being in love should feel like, and which was the true rhythm of being in love.

All I knew was that I responded to him in all earnestness, but my heart was in so much despair that it was almost failing.

What was a kiss supposed to feel like?

...

My life turned upside down after I became Su Qi's girlfriend.

Overnight, it seemed like the whole school knew about our relationship. Su Qi couldn't wait to tell the whole world about it. The next day, the news spread across the campus.

Everyone knew I'd become Su Qi's girlfriend.

Sitting in the classroom and walking across the field, I could feel the inquisitive, envious, jealous, judgmental looks that fell on me.

Su Qi was a well-known figure.

Because our school was very close to the number one key high school, and Su Qi came from a good family, he was handsome and tall, a Prince Charming of sorts in the opinion of most girls.

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As a result, my social relations with my classmates, which were already very poor to begin with, plummeted to non-existent, no one would come near me.

The boys didn't dare to get close to me, being fearful of arousing suspicion.

The girls alienated me. Some of them probably thought it was ridiculous and unorthodox to be dating during junior high school.

Some of them felt that I'd tainted Su Qi's reputation and didn't deserve to be friends with them.

But I didn't care.

At that point, I looked to Su Qi as my salvation. I was hoping that he would lead me out of my unusual situation. I was hoping that he would take me away from the despair that Dongyu had brought into my world.

I wanted to love him.

I really wanted to fall in love with this sunny and handsome boy. Then, I would be able to stand in front of Dongyu boldly and confidently, and say with a smile, "Brother, I'm in love. This is my boyfriend."

Everyone in the school knew that Su Qi and I were dating. Including Dongyu.

Therefore, as I walked towards the school gate after school that evening, I didn't see Su Qi. Instead, I saw Dongyu, whose face was ashen.

He was carrying his school bag and his clothes were in a mess. His usually docile black hair covered his eyes in a rebellious manner. The bruises on his face were not immediately obvious but if one were to look closely, one could tell that he had been in a fight.

I was surprised and walked over. Just as I was about to ask him if he had gotten into a fight, he suddenly grabbed my wrist and questioned me, "Are you really dating Su Qi?!"

"Yeah," I replied, trying to sound casual. "So you know about it?"

"Did he force you!?"

He looked furious, causing me to feel rather helpless.

I didn't know why he was so angry. Shouldn't he be happy?!

He had finally gotten rid of me and didn't need to be bothered by me anymore. Shouldn't he be happy?!

"I confessed to him last night," I said with a calm smile. "As it happens, he's been in love with me for a long time, too. It's mutual. No one forced anyone."

"Are you crazy?!" Dongyu said angrily, "I thought you treated Su Qi like an elder brother. You're still in high school. Do you know what kind of person Su Qi is? You can be friends, but dating is a different matter!"

"I know. He's tall, handsome, bright, and popular. He's also very loyal. Most importantly, he treats me very well. He'll definitely make a good boyfriend!"

Dongyu was obviously enraged by my words. He ruffled his hair impatiently, knitting his handsome brows tightly together. Suddenly, he glared at me again.

"Did you guys kiss?"

I nodded.

His gaze faltered for a moment before he probed further. "Did you two... did you two get intimate..."

Halfway through his question, he felt extremely uneasy and did not continue.

I felt even more awkward now. My face burned as I guessed at once what he wanted to ask.

To put it bluntly, he wanted to ask me if Su Qi and I had slept together.

At that time, I didn't know what I was trying to achieve as I asked numbly, "What if I said we did?"

"You can't!"

Dongyu lost his composure and asked coldly, "Are you doing this to take revenge on me?!"

"Revenge? Why should I take revenge on you?"

I thought for a few seconds and said, "Oh." I let out a cool laugh. "You think I'm mad at you for having found yourself a girlfriend?"

I smiled. "Don't let your imagination run wild. No, it's not like that."

Then, I turned to leave, because I was afraid my eyes would sting if I continued looking at him.

He swung around, took his bicycle, and caught up with me. He grabbed the shoulder strap of my school bag and said, "Get on!"